

MLK's „I Have a Dream“

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1963. This multiple-choice vocabulary quiz is based on the opening five paragraphs of that speech. The quiz should help you build your vocabulary by using context clues to determine the meanings of King's memorable words.

Instructions:

Carefully read these five paragraphs from the opening of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Notice in particular the words in bold. Then, guided by context clues, respond to the ten multiple-choice questions that follow. In each case, identify the synonym that most accurately defines the word as it's used by Dr. King in his speech. When you're done, compare your responses with the answers on page two.

Opening Paragraphs of the "I Have a Dream" Speech by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This **momentous** decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been **seared** in the flames of **withering** injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the **manacles** of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still **languishing** in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a **promissory note** to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has **defaulted** on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this **hallowed** spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of **gradualism**. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and **desolate** valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

momentous

- (a) lasting for just a brief moment
- (b) of great importance or significance
- (c) belonging to the distant past

seared

- (a) painfully burned or scorched
- (b) highlighted, illuminated
- (c) lost, forgotten, abandoned

withering

- (a) devastating, humiliating
- (b) refreshing, rejuvenating
- (c) non-stop, endless

manacles

- (a) laws, rules, principles
- (b) habits, routines
- (c) shackles, handcuffs

languishing

- (a) hiding, kept out of sight
- (b) existing in miserable or disheartening conditions
- (c) lasting for a long time or slow to end

promissory note

- (a) a written promise to repay a debt
- (b) a union formed for mutual benefit
- (c) a pledge to do what is right under the law

defaulted

- (a) brought shame or disgrace on someone
- (b) rewarded or paid back
- (c) failed to fulfill an obligation

hallowed

- (a) formed by making a hole
- (b) nearly forgotten, largely ignored
- (c) highly respected, regarded as holy

gradualism

- (a) forcible overthrow of a social order
- (b) a policy of step-by-step reform over time
- (c) forgetfulness, neglect

desolate

- (a) brightened with light
- (b) depressingly empty or bare
- (c) profound, deep